

The Florist and the Fighter

by GirlsAndTwirls

Category: Naruto
Genre: Romance
Language: English
Characters: Hinata H., Ino Y., Naruto U., Sakura H.
Pairings: Ino Y./Sakura H.
Status: Completed
Published: 2016-04-13 07:26:52
Updated: 2016-04-13 07:26:52
Packaged: 2016-04-27 18:50:41
Rating: T
Chapters: 1
Words: 5,434
Publisher: www.fanfiction.net
Summary: Oneshot. AU. Ino Yamanaka attends the Women's World Kickboxing Championship, where she locks eyes with the beautiful challenger Sakura Haruno.

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Ok, another InoSaku oneshot, this one is an AU story. There are a couple of Narutoverse easter eggs, and a few secondary characters with very minor parts, but the vast majority of this story is exclusive to Sakura and Ino. Hope you enjoy, and as always feel free to review and/or PM.

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"Alright! This is going to be so awesome!" Naruto Uzumaki was practically jumping out of his suit with excitement as he led them through the crowded venue. Ino Yamanaka couldn't help but smirk at him as he drug his wife Hinata forward by the hand. He was closer to 30 than 20 now and a Senator to boot, but he still acted like that obnoxious kid she'd gone to school with sometimes. He kept yelling over the buzz of the 25,000 strong crowd as they made their way closer and closer to the ring. She followed Hinata at a more reasonable pace, finally reaching the front row after pushing through an excitedly chattering group of announcers. She wasn't as big of a fan of the fights as Naruto but even she had to admit this was amazing. Their seats were just a few feet away from the ropes of the ring. She was pretty sure they might even get some sweat or blood on them during the fight.

"Too bad Karin couldn't make it Sasuke. She would have loved this!" Ino turned to watch Sasuke Uchiha shrug his narrow shoulders silently and plop into his seat. Smirking, she took the seat between him and Hinata and leaned over to his ear.

"Yeah, because why wouldn't we want the two of them screaming their heads off and violently shaking us all night?" Sasuke laughed at that, coming out of his shell at least a little bit. The four of them spent the next few minutes chatting idly and watching officials and announcers scurry past as the buzz and energy of the crowd steadily grew to a crescendo. Then, just as she was starting to get restless, all of the lights in the arena except those spotlighting the ring went out. The crowd immediately quieted as an elderly gentleman in a suit climbed into the ring, assisted by a man in officials' stripes. A microphone descended from the darkness above the ring and the older man grabbed it.

"Welcome, ladies and gentlemen, to Hashirama Arena! Tonight we are proud to present to you the Women's Kickboxing World Championship! Are you ready to ruuuuumbly?!" The crowd went absolutely nuts, screaming and pounding their feet. Naruto leapt to his feet and let loose a yell that nearly deafened her from 2 seats away.

"Alright! Let's meet the combatants! In the blue corner, standing at 5 feet 7 inches tall and weighing in at 122 pounds, fighting out of Iwakure, veteran fighter and 3-time defending World Champion Kurotsuchi 'The Mountain' Kamizuuuuuuuuuuuu!" The arena erupted again as the champion emerged from the tunnel opposite of where they were seated. Ino didn't get a good look at her until she reached the ring and sprang up all four steps in a single, casual leap and slipped between the ropes. She was pretty built, her muscles peeking out around her black and blue striped sports bra and shorts. Black tape was wrapped around her feet and hands, and her short black hair hung close to her chin. She danced around the ring a few times, throwing jabs and hooks at the air before returning to her corner. The old man in the middle brought the microphone back to his lips to announce the other combatant.

"And in the red corner, standing at 5 feet 4 inches tall and weighing in at 127 pounds, fighting out of right here in Konoha, new-comer and challenger Sakura 'The Demon' Haaaaaaaaaarunoooo!" The crowd exploded for the hometown hero, a fighter Ino hadn't heard of before tonight. She turned in her seat, craning over Sasuke's shoulder to get a look at her as she approached the ring down the same path they had walked. As the woman drew closer Ino gasped. If the champion was built, the challenger was shredded. Every muscle not hidden by red shorts and sports bra or white tape rippled and rolled beneath her pale skin as she moved. Ino could clearly count every ab in the eight pack stretching across her stomach. It wasn't that her muscles were huge, it just seemed as though there wasn't an ounce of fat on her body. At least, nowhere except her chest and rear. As the fighter stepped past them, a taped hand brushed shoulder-length pink hair to the side and a single gleaming green eye met Ino's stare. The contact lasted only a second, and then the woman skipped the stairs entirely and leapt onto the ring and then swung herself over the ropes to the crowds' delight. She didn't showboat for the crowd like the champion, and in fact never even bothered to glance her opponent's way. Instead she leaned against her corner facing the crowd, head down and eyes closed. Ino simply continued to ogle her body in disbelief. She knew fighters were usually in great shape but this woman was damn near perfect. Her jaw must have been on the floor because Sasuke leaned over and spoke into her ear with a smirk.

"See something you like there Yamanaka?" Ino nodded wholeheartedly.

"You're kidding right? Look at her! She's a goddess!" Sasuke laughed again and shrugged.

"She's definitely pretty, but I don't think I could date a girl that was twice as ripped as me. I thought you were into the more curvy types anyway?" Ino scoffed and bumped his shoulder with hers.

"I usually am, but I've never seen a girl that looked like THAT before. I think I just got a new type. And come on, I'm almost as ripped as you and all I do is yoga. Who do you think you are, Naruto?" Sasuke rolled his eyes and leaned away, shaking his head. She turned her attention back to the ring and was surprised to find the woman they'd been discussing looking right at her. They made eye contact once again, those emerald irises burning a hole into her soul. Then suddenly she turned around and began walking to the center of the ring, and Ino realized she'd missed part of the announcements. The older man was gone, and now it was just the official and the two fighters standing in the center. The official raised the microphone.

"Alright ladies, we went over the rules in the locker room. I want a good, clean fight." The two fighters bowed to each other then stepped back a few paces, taking up stances. The microphone was hauled back up into the darkness, and the official raised his hand. The entire arena held its breath, and then the hand came down. The crowd erupted and the fighters shot into motion. To Ino's surprise it was the challenger who attacked first. She launched herself at the champion with incredible speed, throwing a nasty 4 punch combo that the champion barely evaded before sidestepping away. Standing this close together, the difference in their size was painfully obvious. The champion had height and reach, but the pink-haired challenger seemed twice as big somehow. The rest of the first round went about the same as the first 10 seconds. The challenger pursued the champion around the ring doggedly. Most blows thrown by either side were dodged or blocked, but they each landed a few good shots. In the last few seconds of the round the challenger slipped a kick past the champion's guard and it crashed into her left side. She stumbled sideways and crashed into the ropes just as the bell rang and the crowd roared again. Walking casually back to her corner, Ino noticed the pink-haired woman smirking as she waved away her coach. Meanwhile, the champion had to struggle to haul herself to her corner where she collapsed onto a stool, holding her side. Her coach and doctor hurriedly began working on it as the official hovered nearby. After a minute and a half, during which the champion's team worked on her and the challenger casually leaned against the ropes in her corner, the bell rang again. Everyone but the official and the fighters vacated the ring and the three remaining people came to the center again. The champion was moving cautiously, but the pink-haired woman was almost walking with a swagger. The official started the second round and the champion was against the ropes immediately. Ino had never seen so many punches and kicks thrown so quickly. Several crashed through the champion's guard, and then a monster right hook connected to her temple and she was slumped on the mat. Less than 30 seconds into the second round and the champion was down. The crowd screamed louder than it ever had before and Ino joined in, swept along by the fire and passion. The official began the count as the challenger danced lightly around the rest of the ring. At 6, the champion shot up to her feet, fury written plainly on her face. Ino cheered along with the crowd, standing and clapping. They reset and

the official dropped his hand again.

This time the champion attacked, clearly still furious that she had been dropped. Every single punch and kick was evaded or blocked however. The challenger simply grinned and let her swing away until her blows started to slow. Ino saw it almost before it happened. The champion threw a hook and her opponent nonchalantly watched it sail past her face before planting an uppercut under her chin. The champion staggered backwards, arms dropping lamely to her sides, and then a roundhouse kick slammed into her head. The 3-time defending world champion collapsed to the mat like a wet paper bag and everyone in the arena knew she wasn't getting up. Ino jumped up and screamed until her throat was raw, arms punching the air over her head. It was the most exciting thing she'd ever seen and she screamed and cheered with the crowd through the final count, through the ex-champion's coach and doctor helping the now barely-conscious fighter out of the ring, and even through the presentation of the belt and the announcement of the new World Champion. An announcer asked the pink-haired fighter a few questions, to which she gave polite but curt answers, and then she was climbing out of the ring to head back up her tunnel. As she came down the steps, her head turned towards the still cheering Ino. They locked eyes again, and the pink-haired woman smiled widely at her, then gave her a wink Ino could only describe as sultry. Ino's heart skipped a beat. She gaped at the woman who smiled even wider as she turned and started heading back to her locker room. Ino stared after her in stunned silence until Naruto came crashing over her shoulder screaming to high heaven.

"Oh my god! We HAVE to go meet her! That was AMAZING! I've never seen someone manhandle The freaking Mountain before! THE MOUNTAIN! And she wrecked her! She was playing with her like a toddler with a teddy bear! Playing with the freaking World Champion! Are you kidding me?! Come on! I'm getting us back there!" He had a grip on her arm and began dragging her and Hinata both towards the tunnel, Sasuke begrudgingly following. They reached the entrance to the tunnel, which had several guards, and Naruto began talking excitedly with a strange man in a green suit who's black hair was horribly cut in a bowl shape. They chatted for about a minute with crazy hand gestures before the man slapped Naruto's back and strode into the tunnel. Naruto hurried back to them with a fierce grin.

"We're in! Mr. Maito's a good friend of mine so he's gonna get us a minute of face time with the new champ!" Ino felt a nervous knot start to form in the pit of her stomach. They were actually going to go back there and meet that woman? The gorgeous one who just winked at her like she could read her mind? Mr. Maito returned, excitedly beckoning for them to follow him. The four of them strode into the tunnel and turned down a well lit hallway. Ino let Naruto and Sasuke take the lead, hovering back with Hinata who was shaking her head and smiling at her husband's antics. They stopped at a door which Mr. Maito knocked on. A faint response called out and he opened the door, ushering them in before closing it behind them. They were in a large room with lockers lining one wall with benches in front of them, a mat in the center of the room, and a table and cooling tub opposite the lockers. And there, standing by an open locker unwinding the last of the tape on her hands, was the pink-haired woman. She looked up, those green eyes searching each of their faces before finding Ino's. She could swear they lit up like fireworks as they met her gaze, and her lips curled into a smile before opening.

"So a Konoha Senator huh? I saw you guys in the front row." Her voice was sweet but her tone was gruff. Ino absently thought it fit her perfectly.

"Yeah! I'm Representative Naruto Uzumaki and this is my wife Hinata. Man, you totally kicked ass out there tonight!"

"Haha thanks, Sakura Haruno." She stepped forward and shook his enthusiastically offered hand, then Hinata's. Then she turned her gaze on Sasuke and offered her hand.

"And what about you? You a senator too?" Sasuke shook her hand while simultaneously shaking his head.

"Sasuke Uchiha, Sergeant, Konoha Police Department." Sakura nodded her head, and then she was in front of Ino. She was smiling even bigger now, exuding confidence as she extended her hand. Ino gulped, surprisingly nervous. She was acutely aware of the sweat trailing its way into Sakura's cleavage and then back out over her abs below.

"Well, I didn't think I'd be seeing you again so soon. How about it, beautiful? What's your name?" Ino took her hand, more holding it than shaking it for some idiotic reason.

"Uh Ino. Ino Yamanaka. I run...a flower shop in the uh, the Market District." Sakura's eyes sparked at her and she held Ino's hand for a heartbeat or two longer than the others. Eventually she let go, but her fingertips dragged along Ino's skin as they slipped away.

"Well Mr. Uzumaki, I'd love to keep chatting, but I need a shower REALLY bad." Her eyes didn't leave Ino until Naruto responded.

"Oh, of course! We just wanted to meet you and tell you how great your fight was! I mean that was just incredible! Oh, and to tell you how proud we are to have a citizen of Konoha holding the World Championship belt!" Sakura shook Naruto and Hinata's hands again and thanked them for their support. The four of them turned and filed out of the door, Ino last in line. Just before the door closed she looked back. Sakura was watching her with a smirk, her thumb hooked in the waist of her shorts and slowly pulling it down her hip. Ino blushed and turned away, gulping nervously again. What was happening right now?

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"Thank you, please come again." Ino sighed as the door closed behind the young man. Another guy buying flowers for his girlfriend. She sat back in the seat behind the counter of her shop and rested her chin on her hand. That seemed to be just about all of the business she did that wasn't online-ordering now-a-days. Most people who came through her door were just there for pick-ups, and since most of their orders were simple it left her with a lot of free time. Free time for someone as perky as her was a definite downer. Usually she watched tv on her laptop, but today she just didn't feel like it. She closed her eyes and debated taking a little nap. She'd just really gotten comfortable and a little drowsy when the bell over the door rang and the sound of traffic on the street filtered through the thick atmosphere of flowers and leaves.

"Just let me know if you need help with anything." She called out, not bothering to open her eyes.

"Well, to be honest I don't really know anything about flowers. So maybe you could help me pick out some to impress a beautiful woman?" Ino sighed again. Of course. Another guy buying flowers for a girl...wait. That wasn't a guy's voice. She opened her eyes and lifted her head. Standing on the other side of the counter smiling back at her was Sakura Haruno. Ino jumped to her feet.

"S-Sakura! Um, hi?" The pink-haired woman laughed softly.

"Hi Ino." Ino swept a strand of wild hair away from her face, suddenly cursing the fact that she'd forgotten to do her laundry the night before and was wearing this stupid too-big pink sweater.

"Um, how did you find me?" Sakura laughed again, taking another step forward so that her hips were pressed to the counter.

"Well, you said your name was Ino Yamanaka, and that you owned a flower shop in the Market District. And this is a flower shop in the Market District named 'Yamanaka Flowers' sooo...it took like two seconds to find it online. I might not be a professor or anything, but I can still use a search engine." Ino blushed at how stupid the question was, barely resisting the urge to smack herself in the forehead.

"So um, why did you...you know, hunt me down?" Sakura smiled more brightly and leaned in. Her face was maybe only a foot away now. She smelled surprisingly sweet, like tangerines.

"Well like I said, I want to get flowers to impress this really beautiful woman I met a couple nights ago but I don't know anything about them. I thought you could help me. You see, I want to ask her out, and I'm pretty sure she's into me too. But, I mean, we only talked for like a minute, so I want to really make the extra effort. You know what I mean?" She was resting her elbows on the counter now, batting her eyelashes as she smiled innocently at Ino. Ino gulped and smiled back, nodding silently. She turned and stepped out from behind the counter, brushing past Sakura, who followed closely. She was nervous, which was so unlike her. Normally she was the perky blond who never got nervous or caught up on anything. But there was just something about Sakura that was different. She stopped in front of a wall of bright red, her biggest sellers.

"Um, well there's red roses of course. Everyone knows that they're romantic." Sakura plucked a single long-stemmed rose from its place and twirled it between her fingers before giving it a soft sniff. Placing it back with surprising delicacy, she shook her head. Ino smiled at her. Everyone bought roses. They were so...common.

"Well then. There are wildflowers. They come in all kinds of colors and can be very romantic. There are violets, which are very beautiful. Tulips, which can be very pretty, but they're not really the kind of thing you give a date. Or orchids. They're very sexy though, so that would send a certain message." She turned to Sakura, who was watching her with another wide smile.

"That's a lot of options. I want it to be romantic, and beautiful, and a little sexy, but not too much. I am just asking for a first

date. For now." Ino blushed, something Sakura did not miss. The pink-haired woman inched closer.

"What are your favorites?" Ino tucked the wild strand of hair away again and nodded her head towards the back corner. Brushing past Sakura again, she led her to her favorite section of the entire shop. Sakura stopped next to her, shoulder just brushing hers. The pink-haired woman let out a little sigh of contentment.

"The lilies are my favorite. They come in all the colors. They're very romantic, yet still sexy. And many of them smell absolutely divine." Sakura stepped forward, slowly tracing fingers along petals and leaning in to smell here and there. Ino took advantage of her distraction to look her over again. She was wearing simple jeans and a moderately tight white v-neck sweater. Ino could still tell she was cut with muscle from head to toe, but now that she wasn't sweaty and fighting there was much more femininity to her. The curve of her thighs and hips. The swell of her chest. The way her hair followed the actually-kind-of-dainty slope of her jaw and the sweet look on her face. Ino followed the red polish on her fingernails as she reached up to gently stroke spotted pink petals rimmed in white.

"That's the Stargazer Lily. It's uncommon here and that makes it popular. I always hate having to sell that one." She sighed longingly. It was a gorgeous flower, and its perfume made her feel warm and fuzzy inside. Sakura turned back to her, head tilted curiously. Then she smiled and her fingertips brushed Ino's hand softly.

"Not this time, you won't. That's the one I want." Ino smiled back at her and nodded, then stiffened a little as Sakura moved closer again. The pink-haired woman's fingers brushed her hand again before reaching up to tuck that wild strand of hair back behind Ino's ear, where they held it.

"Only thing is, I didn't bring any money with me. So why don't you just keep it, and I'll pay for it tomorrow night with dinner and sparkling conversation? Say 7 o'clock?" Ino's breath was caught in her chest. She'd known this was coming since she opened her eyes and saw Sakura standing in her shop, but it still shocked her into silence. This beautiful woman was asking her out and she needed to say yes. Why was her stomach so full of butterflies?

"T-that sounds great, Sakura." Sakura grinned like the cat who had just caught the canary. She slowly ran her fingers down Ino's neck before leaning in and brushing her lips against Ino's cheek.

"Great. There's a place just around the corner from here. Ichiraku's. I'll meet you there, ok? 7 o'clock. See you tomorrow night, beautiful." And just like that she was stepping out through the door. Ino let out a shaky breath and smiled. She hadn't felt like this since she was a teenager going on her first date with her first girlfriend. Rubbing fingers against her burning cheek, she turned to the Stargazer Lily and smiled even brighter. Reaching up, she gently slid the pot off of the shelf and cradled it in her arms. Leaning down, she inhaled its intoxicating scent. Giddy with anticipation she turned and carried the flower up the back stairs to her apartment over the shop. She couldn't wait to call Hinata and tell her what had just happened!

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"Are you sure this is going to be ok? I know it's a fancy restaurant, but I don't think Sakura's the girly, formal type." Ino turned a little and smoothed the fabric of the dress over her hips, glancing at Hinata's reflection in the mirror. Hinata simply nodded. Ino stepped back and took in her reflection again. The dress was a spectacular single-sleeved thing she'd bought a few months prior to wear to one of Naruto's fundraisers. It was a deep purple, with a neckline that extended from the top of her right breast to her left shoulder and then down her left shoulder blade to about mid-back. It left her entire right arm, shoulder, upper chest and upper back open. It was form-fitting all the way to the hemline at her knees, with only tiny slits in the side for extra mobility. She'd finished the look with short heels of the same color. She was already a few inches taller than Sakura and she didn't want to tower over her. She swept her hair around the back of her neck and over her left shoulder, letting it cascade over the fabric encasing her chest. She had to admit, she felt beautiful like this. Checking the time, she started and hurriedly scooped up her clutch. Hugging Hinata goodbye, she asked her to lock up on her way out and rushed down the stairs and through the front door of her shop. Ichiraku really was only 2 blocks down the road, but she didn't want to be late. Striding down the sidewalk towards her destination, she could feel the excitement bubbling in her stomach. She wasn't nervous any more, but she was still as jittery as a schoolgirl.

It took her about 10 minutes to get to Ichiraku, and when she did her jaw dropped. Sakura might be a world champion kickboxer and a little overly aggressive romantically, but tonight she was absolutely a girly, formal type. She was standing there in a burgundy sleeveless v-neck dress that had Ino's blood boiling. Like Ino's, Sakura's dress was tight-to-form with a knee-length hemline with slits at the sides. But unlike Ino's, hers was completely backless, showing off a toned canvas of perfect creamy skin. Three inch black stilettos, mascara, and dark red lipstick finished it all off. When she spotted Ino she smiled brightly and rushed over. They stood there for a few moments, taking each other in silently. Then Sakura leaned and kissed her cheek softly again.

"You look absolutely stunning, Ino." Ino blushed and shook her head.

"Not as stunning as you! You're gorgeous." Sakura smiled and...blushed? Ino looked again and yes, she was blushing as well. Looking away for a moment, Sakura tugged at her hair before turning back and smiling at her. Slipping her arm around Ino's, the pink-haired beauty softly led her through the doors of the restaurant. She gave her name to the hostess, who then led them to a small table in a room decorated lavishly with golden columns and a softly babbling water fountain in the shape of a fish. There were several other groups seated in the room, all dressed fancily and talking quietly. They sat down, finding that the table was small enough to be intimate, with their feet and lower legs brushing together. A waiter appeared, seemingly out of nowhere, and asked for their drink order. When neither of them seemed to know what to order, he suggested a wine that they immediately agreed to. They sat in a not-unpleasant silence until he returned with two menus, two glasses and a bottle. Once he had gone, Sakura leaned forward

conspiratorially.

"I have to admit, Ino, I've never been to a place like this before. I mean I usually eat at like, you know, diners or at home. I just wanted to take you somewhere really nice. I actually just bought this dress today" She was blushing again. Ino smiled and chuckled quietly, leaning in too.

"Me neither. I've been to fancy government parties with Naruto, but I've never been to this kind of place. I don't even know what half this stuff on the menu is." Sakura laughed and shook her head. They smiled at each other, Sakura's foot sliding along Ino's calf for a moment. Then Sakura picked up her glass and held it forward. Ino did the same, touching them gently.

"To new places, new experiences, and beautiful new people." Ino nodded and they both brought their glasses to their lips, sipping the wine. It was terrible. They both made a face at the same time, then fell about giggling at each other. When they finally regained their composure Ino realized that some of the other patrons were looking at them disapprovingly. Getting an idea, she reached across the table and put her hand on Sakura's. The pink-haired woman jumped a little at the contact before smiling and leaning forward again.

"It's really sweet that you wanted to take me somewhere nice. And to be honest, I'm willing to do just about anything that involves you in that dress. But...do you wanna get out of here? I don't think this place is really our speed. There's a diner down the street that has amazing cheeseburgers?" Sakura grinned like a kid on Christmas and wrapped her fingers in Ino's, grabbing her hand and standing up. Fishing a few bills out of the purse at her hip, she tossed them on the table. Tightening her grip on Ino's hand, she gently pulled her along as she headed toward the exit. The two of them half-walked, half-ran out of the restaurant. Giggling and clinging to each other they took off in the direction of the diner.

Twenty minutes later they were tucked into a faded leather booth, side-by-side, digging into their burgers. Ino had to admit that now that she'd gotten over her initial nervousness, being with Sakura was incredibly easy. Ino told her about how she'd gone to school with Naruto and the others, and about how when she graduated high school she gave up on going to college and took over her parents' flower shop so they could retire and move to the beach. Sakura told her about how her dad had been a fighter and that's why she was such an aggressive tomboy. And then she told her how her dad had died from an illness when she was a teenager, before he had a chance to really make a name for himself, so she fought for him. They laughed at stupid jokes and sighed at how sweet an elderly couple having dinner were. An hour went by, and then a second as they ordered and drank milkshakes. The streets were considerably less busy by the time they finally bid their waitress farewell and reemerged from the diner. They stood there silently for a moment before Ino grabbed her hand again.

"Walk me home?" Sakura nodded. They began to walk slowly, taking their time as they continued to talk about anything and everything. It was a beautiful night and they meant to enjoy it. But eventually they did reach Ino's flower shop, stopping in front of it. Sakura looked up at the sign and then smiled sadly.

"You sure your place isn't, I don't know, like another 20 blocks?" Ino laughed and shook her head. Sakura nodded, looking at their still-joined hands.

"Invite me up for some tea then?" Ino blushed and separated her hand from Sakura's, looking away.

"I'm sorry. I know I'm too, you know, aggressive sometimes. I never know when to stop or shut up. I've always been like that." Ino looked up to see her holding her arm, shoulders slumped. Grinning to herself she stepped forward, taking Sakura's face in both hands. Lifting it up to hers she pressed her lips to Sakura's. It felt incredible to finally do it. After a few seconds she broke the kiss off, letting one hand caress down the pink-haired woman's neck softly.

"It's not that I don't want to invite you up. Believe me, I really do. But it's just a first date. For now." Sakura's eyes sparkled at the reuse of her own words and she leaned in for another soft, sweet kiss.

"For now."

End
file.